

**May 21, 2007** remarks of Larry Sanders, President, Straits of Mackinac Shipwreck Preserve Association concerning the proposed "Great Lakes State Park" legislation.

**These laws actually "create" a new state park.**

- Does not really matter

**Tourism increase is speculative and may have unanticipated problems**

- Charts:
  1. Number of divers coming to the Straits - many year to year repeats who come each year.
  2. States divers come from. Regional basis, difficulty of transporting diver's own equipment
  3. Monthly distribution of divers. 3 - 3 ½ month season. Shorter as you go north.
  4. Weekend dive trips are most common pattern. Charters operate only on weekends and air stations do the same. Diver's largest expense is for gas and charters. Stay in cheaper motels, eat at local bars

**Care must be exercised when inviting many divers to come to Michigan as "tourists".**

- Legislature declared to be an "**inherently dangerous**" one in which the participant assumes the risk of serious injury or death.
- **The equipment used in the Great Lakes is unlike simple Caribbean diving in warm water with aluminum tanks. The photos show the extensive equipment.**
- Expensive. Custom. Hard to transport. Training to do this safely.
- Cold water, poor vis, strong currents
- Shipwrecks are the most common dive sites.
- Various conditions and positions.

- Cedarville is virtually upside down and very confusing. People go into the engine room and stir up the silt.
- Risks. Panic. Dive beyond skills.
- **People die. My experiences. I am not anxious see anyone die again. Please do not be naïve about this.**

**A "Great Lakes State Park" has serious budget implications.**

- No existing infrastructure
- Buoying
- As a state park, unlike underwater preserves, the DNR and NRC can **charge fees and issue bonds** for improvement and the state has limited government immunity.
- **As a state park, it will no longer be fair to expect the rest of us to provide the buoys,** install and remove them and assume the risks of injury to ourselves and liability if someone gets hurt using a buoy we bought and installed. It is actually possible we will become trespassers in a state park if one is created and we continue to do this.

**Estimated cost to buoy the shipwrecks in the Straits**

- On the chart in the appendix. It is approximately \$40,000
- This is not just a one time per year expense, on going maintenance will be required as buoys come loose or are damaged.

More costs:

- Conservation officers
- DNR will need its own divers or contract divers.
- The buoys will have to be maintained and help will be required in emergencies. The risk of injury to these divers will also be present.

- Boats and fuel will be necessary to enforce the laws, for rescue, and for buoy service.
- Recompression chambers. There are only 2 in Michigan now – Marquette and Kalamazoo. One is available at Milwaukee.
- State will have to create a system of local air stations for air fills.

**There is no funding in place to pay for this.**

- Using the 2004 budget unused recreational area cost \$28,000 that year to “operate” it.
- \$15 voluntary fee will not work
- First chart produces maximum of \$165,000
  - Reality is less than 5% = **\$8,250**
- Second analysis produces maximum of \$82,500
  - Reality is less than 5% = **\$4,125**

**Summary**

- This is not an existing “state park” and making it one actually upsets the NREPA statutory balance
- An increase in “tourism” is unlikely due to the short season; equipment required; and necessary training and experience
- Diving is expensive and dangerous it is not something for novices or the naïve
- The proposed “State Park” has serious budget implications; cost thousands even if nothing is done; \$15 voluntary fee will not raise much money, if any.